

# OUR PRINCIPLES



Our values and culture are vital to the successful delivery of the Aston University Strategy 2018 to 2023. The University recognises its responsibility to be an exemplar of behaviour and conduct in all that it does, and it aspires to lead the HE sector in terms of its approach to ethical practice. The University's values, as identified in the Strategy, are to be professional and ambitious; to be innovative and collaborative; and to be ethical and inclusive.

The University's reputation and the trust of its beneficiaries and stakeholders are among its most important assets – although these take a long time to attain they may be lost very quickly. Acting with integrity is not only the right thing to do, it protects the interests of our beneficiaries; improves our performance; and differentiates us in an increasingly competitive and complex global higher education market. All members of the Aston community have an important role to play in achieving these goals and creating a culture where ethical conduct is intrinsic to the University's cultural foundations.

**Professor Alec Cameron**  
Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

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**Our Guiding Principles reflect our collective commitment to high ethical standards and regulatory compliance and set out the principles by which the University operates. These principles in turn find more detailed expression in a broad range of regulations, policies and practices which govern our relationships with beneficiaries, colleagues, partners, suppliers and other stakeholders. This document sets out the standards we expect of all members of the University, and, where relevant, the wider community, in everything they do and wherever they operate.**

As a member of the Aston community, it is your responsibility to understand, comply with and to promote the adoption of Our Guiding Principles. You also have a responsibility to raise compliance and ethics concerns through the established channels. This is the way to ensure that Aston University is and continues to be a great place to work and study.

## **Adherence to the Highest Ethical Standards**

The University is an educational, charitable and chartered corporation, exempt under the terms of the Charities Act 1993. The overall charitable purpose of the University is set out in the Royal Charter awarded in 1966: *“to advance, disseminate and apply learning and knowledge by teaching and research for the benefit of industry and commerce and of the community generally and to enable students to obtain the advantage of a university education”*. All members of the University are expected to focus their efforts on the University’s purpose and to work together in the interests of the University’s beneficiaries.

### **Key principles**

Members of the University are expected to act to uphold the following principles:

## **1. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

We value diversity and view it as a strength. We will work together as an institution in order to ensure that the all members of our staff, students and community are treated with fairness and equity.

The commitment of staff to implement equality in all aspects of their work is fundamental to effective service and working relationships. Staff must adhere to University policy, which aims to promote equality and diversity within the University community in all aspects of its work.

The University will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour. The University will take disciplinary action against individuals who breach its applicable policies.

## **2. INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

We will not place ourselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to improperly influence us in the performance of our duties.

We will make choices on merit when carrying out duties, including making appointments, admitting students, awarding contracts, conferring honours/awards, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.

We will be open and honest in our dealings with colleagues, students and third parties. We will ensure that the University is aware of any business or personal relationships which could create a conflict of interest or may be perceived to create a conflict of interest. We will declare any private interests that may impact on our duties to the University and take steps to resolve these.

All members of the University are expected to familiarise themselves with the relevant legislation, regulations and University rules which apply to their positions and duties, and to comply with them.

Any questions and concerns about the legality or propriety of any action or failure to take action by or on behalf of the University should be referred either to the member's line manager or the Office of the General Counsel as appropriate.

### 3. ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We recognise that academic staff at English higher education providers have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions in their disciplinary field without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges. Furthermore, all members of the University community enjoy the benefits of, and are subject to, the rights and obligations set out in the Freedom of Expression Policy.

All members of the University involved in teaching, learning, assessment and/or research are expected to conform to the highest standards of honesty and integrity in the conduct of those activities. They must respect the intellectual property rights of others. Activities such as plagiarism, misrepresentation, and falsification of data are prohibited. All research at the University must be conducted in strict conformity with the applicable University policies, procedures, and approvals and the requirements of all governmental and private research sponsors.

### 4. SOCIETAL IMPACT

Aston will ensure that its activities have a beneficial impact on society and the environment, both in the immediate geographical area, and more widely within the UK and around the world. This includes meeting high standards in terms of sustainability (financial, social and environmental), supporting businesses within our community, and widening participation.

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#### **Duty to Speak Up**

We will uphold the standards and values of Aston University and will report suspected violations of Our Principles or any University policy. The Whistleblowing Policy provides a confidential and secure way for members of the University to raise concerns about such misconduct and outlines the key steps they need to take and who to contact if they wish to raise a concern.

#### **Policy Infrastructure**

The principles outlined in this document find more detailed expression in the policies which are set out in the University's "four pillars" policy infrastructure: Academic, Integrity, Stewardship and Respect. Those policies are developed and maintained in accordance with the Policy Development and Maintenance Procedure.

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